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AUTHOR Gil, Sylvia
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ABSTRACT

This paper answers a series of questions concerning the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM): what it is, who it is designed for, what it consists of, how long it takes to administer the test, who should administer it, where the BSM should be given, how to conduct the assessment, and how to score the test. The paper concludes that, overall, the BSM can be useful for diagnosing a student's strengths and weaknesses in the basic structures of a language, for student placement, and to measure the degree a student has maintained or lost certain basic structures. The measure offers instructional suggestions for each level. (Author/IRT)

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BSM ASSESSES LINGUISTIC PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH/SPANISH

by Sylvia Gil

Intercultural Development
Research Association

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School districts implementing educational programs are focusing on utilizing language assessment instruments for effective instructional placement in bilingual bicultural curricula. The Bilingual Syntax Measure, published by Harcourt Brace Javonovich, Inc., is one instrument being used by districts.

The BSM stresses using the child's existing syntaxtic structures for assessing linguistic proficiency in English and/or Spanish.

What does BSM measure?

It measures language dominance and/or proficiency and is designed to elicit children's daily language patterns. Based on the child's response an analysis of his/her structural proficiency is made in order to determine the language level.

Who is the BSM designed for?

The instrument is for children four to nine years of age.

What does the BSM consist of?

There are six components and two language versions.

. English Manual: contains directions for administering and scoring the measure and a general description of the language levels.

. Child's Response Booklet: contains the questions to be asked and the space for recording and scoring the responses.

. Spanish Manual: details directions for administering and scoring the measure and an overview of the language levels.

. Folleto de respuestas del nino: contains the questions to be asked and the space for recording and scoring the responses.

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. Picture Booklet: consists of seven color cartoon-type pictures used in administering both versions of the measure.

. Class Record Sheet: useful for recording data on each pupil's age, score, and level.

How long does it take to administer?

Fifteen minutes of testing time should be allotted for both versions.

Who should administer it?

An individual proficient in the two languages should conduct the assessment.

Where should the BSM be given?

Select a quiet corner in the classroom or an area away from the classroom setting.

How do you conduct the assessment?

An informal atmosphere is appropriate. Ask the test questions as they are written and write down the response exactly as the child says it.

It is recommended that if both versions are to be administered to one child, that this be done several hours apart.

How is the BSM scored?

The scorer must determine whether a child's response to a given question is grammatical or ungrammatical. In scoring the measure always consider the context of the question. Although the child has complete freedom in his choice of vocabulary and the manner in which he perceives the picture stimuli, a response is scored either totally grammatically correct and receives 1 point or it is scored completely ungrammatically and receives no points.

The following is an example of a test question found in the BSM and how it is scored.

Test item:	(Point to doors)	
	What are these?	
Response:	doors	1 (grammatical)
	two door	0 (ungrammatical)

The scoring procedure includes the minimal criteria for assigning children to the appropriate oral language proficiency level:

1-No English/Spanish

2-Receptive English/Spanish only

3-Survival English/Spanish

4-Intermediate English/Spanish

5-Proficient English/Spanish

A comparison of the pupil's English and Spanish linguistic ability is then made to determine language dominance and the degree of structural proficiency.

Overall the BSM can be useful for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses in the basic structures of a language, for placement and to measure the degree of maintenance or loss of certain basic structures. It also offers instructional suggestions for each level.